

Notes to presenters (not to be shown to audience)

This presentation is designed to be delivered to school staff by an education or allied health professional. There are options in several places for you to adapt this presentation to your local context.

We ask when doing so that you adhere to the RADLD principles of being evidence based. There is lots of information available at radld.org/resources for you to deepen your knowledge.



What every teacher needs to know about Developmental Language Disorder

Presenter's Name

#DLDday

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DEVELOPMENTAL
LANGUAGE DISORDER

What is Developmental Language Disorder?

- **Developmental**: starts in childhood (but does not go away)
- **LANGUAGE** : words and sentences, understanding and/or talking
- **Disorder**: something not as expected

Developmental Language Disorder =
problem with spoken language: talking
and/or understanding for no known reason



What is Developmental Language Disorder?

The difficulties with language exist without another biomedical condition such as autism or intellectual disability.

DLD has a genetic and biological basis. It is not caused by families not talking to their children enough.

However, families are REALLY important for supporting their child's language.

It is not something that children grow out of.

Impacts of DLD (1)

DLD is a serious condition, because difficulties with language will impact on:

1. Learning: a lot of classwork is done by talking. If a student is struggling to participate in classroom discussions, then they are likely to struggle to access learning.

2. Literacy: language is the foundation for learning to read and write. Language is needed to understand what is read, as well as being linked to decoding. Students need language (words and sentences) before they can write them on the page.

Impacts of DLD (2)

- 3. Social relationships:** it can be hard to join in conversations and understand what others are saying. This can make it hard to make and keep friends.
- 4. Mental health:** it can also be hard to feel good about yourself when school is challenging and you feel socially isolated.
- 5. Behaviour:** we tend to act differently when we are struggling to understand and/or feel misunderstood. If we don't have the language to communicate, then expressing ourselves through actions is the next logical step.



Individuals with DLD are:

- 6 times more likely to have reading difficulties
- 6 times more likely to have significant spelling problems
- 4 times more likely to struggle with math

12 times more likely to face all three of these difficulties combined.

Young et al., 2002

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Group Discussion

In pairs or small groups

- Think through a typical student's day. From the time they enter the classroom until home time.
- What are the spoken language demands they face (talking and understanding)?
- What are the impacts for students who do not have the same level of spoken language (talking and understanding) as their peers?

How many children have DLD?

- One large study found that 7.5% of all children had DLD.
- In an average class of 30, two children have DLD (Norbury et al., 2016)

Use the RADLD Population Calculator
(<https://radld.org/about/dld/population-calculator/>) to add:

- In this school
- In this town
- In our country



But DLD is largely unknown

- Almost no one in the general public has heard of it
- Most teachers have never heard of it
- And so:
 - Students keep on struggling with learning
 - Reading interventions don't work
 - Students don't respond to behaviour and attention support



Teachers have a special role to play

- Home talk is often simple, routine and predictable
- But school talk is richer and more sophisticated. It is more like 'book language'
- So, issues with child language may not be seen at home, but may be seen at school
- As language demands increase at school, some more subtle difficulties that were missed earlier may start to be seen



Noticing DLD: Talking

Listen to what students say

- Many students with DLD will talk less than their peers, but don't think of them as shy
- Some students with DLD can be chatty, so think about the quality of their talk
- Look out for:
 - shorter and less connected sentences
 - less sophisticated vocabulary than peers.
 - less detailed explanations of their thinking
 - difficulty organising talk (thoughts might appear jumbled)
 - less complex stories or descriptions of events

Noticing DLD: Understanding

Observe how students respond to spoken language

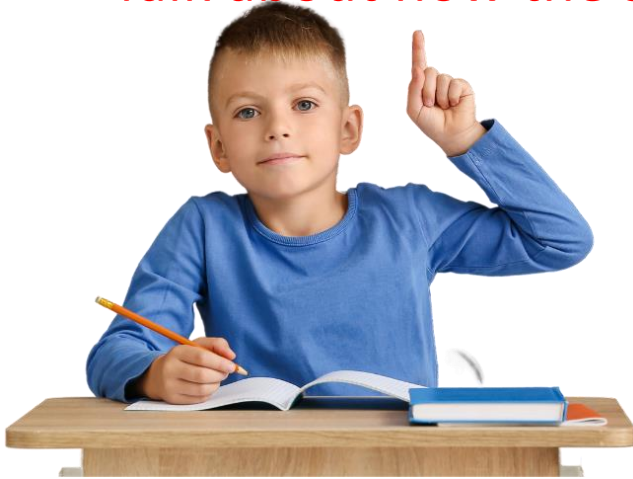
- Understanding can be less obvious than talking.
- Students with DLD will struggle to understand the words and sentences of instructions or class discussion
- Some students with DLD copy what others are doing and seem to comply (a good strategy up to a point)
- Others will say 'yes' when asked if they understand, even when they do not understand.

Multilingual students with DLD

- **Speaking an additional language does not lead to DLD**
- Most children who speak a different home language acquire the local language well in school.
- DLD impacts on all languages, so will be present in a child's home language too.
- DLD may be first noticed in school because a student is struggling to learn the school language.
- How does this student's learning compare to siblings or others from the same community who have had a similar exposure to the school language?
- Need to investigate the home language as well as school language

A student in your school

- If there is a student who has been formally diagnosed with DLD in your school, talk a little about how they present
- (either anonymously or with specific consent)
- Remember DLD presents differently in different students, so not all will be the same
- Talk about how the student presents in class and the support provided



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Activity

- In pairs think of a class / classes that both are familiar with
- Reflect on students who are not progressing as expected
- They may have 'labels' (or not)
- Think about the role spoken language is having on their learning, literacy, relationships and behaviour
- How well do they understand and participate in class discussion?

Common misconceptions

They'll grow out of it

WRONG: DLD is a lifelong condition. Support needs to be ongoing.

Spoken language is only important for young children

WRONG: language demands such as vocabulary and complex sentences increase significantly in secondary / high school.

Specialists are the only ones who can support these students

WRONG: positive relationships with supportive adults and small adjustments to teaching often have a huge impact on students with DLD

Take action

Adapt this to fit local circumstances

- Talk to parents
 - But because there is low awareness of DLD many parents may also not be aware
- Talk to your school special education lead/ specialist
- Refer to specialist services, such as Speech and Language Therapy / Speech-Language Pathology

Supporting Students with DLD

General strategies that support DLD, support all learners

- To support understanding
 - Simple language (short sentences, less complex vocabulary)
 - Use visuals and objects
 - Encourage whole class to say when they do not understand
- To support expression
 - Model the language or provide sentence starters
 - Explicit teaching of vocabulary and sentences
 - Extra time to get thoughts into words



Support strategies

Insert 2022 strategies graphic here

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A video to finish

Embed 2022 video here



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Learn more

- RADLD.org
- DLDandMe.org
- naplic.org.uk/DLD
- TheDLDProject.com
- **Any other local websites/training opportunities**



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